

DAN BURTON, INDIANA,
CHAIRMAN

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, NEW YORK
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
STEPHEN HORN, CALIFORNIA
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
THOMAS M. DAVIS, VIRGINIA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
BOB BARR, GEORGIA
DAN MILLER, FLORIDA
DOUG OSE, CALIFORNIA
RON LEWIS, KENTUCKY
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
DAVE WELDON, FLORIDA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
ADAM H. PUTNAM, FLORIDA
C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER, IDAHO
EDWARD L. SCHROCK, VIRGINIA
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
JOHN SULLIVAN, OKLAHOMA

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
TTY (202) 225-6852

www.house.gov/reform

October 28, 2002

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
PATSY T. MINK, HAWAII
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, ILLINOIS
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
JIM TURNER, TEXAS
THOMAS H. ALLEN, MAINE
JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

As members of the House Committee on Government Reform, we are concerned that Brooklyn residents may be experiencing serious adverse health effects due to the large debris cloud caused by the World Trade Center (WTC) attacks on September 11, 2001. We are writing to request that Brooklyn residents be given the opportunity to be included in the World Trade Center Registry, which was established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the City of New York to study potential health effects among people exposed to WTC-related dust and smoke.

According to an article entitled "Under the Plume," which appeared in the October 21, 2002, edition of *The American Prospect*, there is no doubt that Brooklyn residents were exposed to a dangerous cloud of debris on and after September 11, 2001:

It is now clear, thanks to NASA space photographs . . . that the black, toxin-laden plume of World Trade Center debris blew for more than 30 hours directly from Ground Zero to the East River, which separates Manhattan from Brooklyn and Queens. The plume obscured the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as dozens of Brooklyn neighborhoods all the way out to Coney Island, from aerial view. Until the Ground Zero fires finally burned out in early December, prevailing winds on most days carried smoke and fumes along the same path.

Specifically, the NASA satellite photographs indicate that the debris plume affected the neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill, Park Slope, Prospect Park, and Coney Island.

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
October 28, 2002
Page 2

A similar point was made in an August 23 article in *Newsday*, entitled "Ill Winds of 9/11 — Little Scrutiny for Brooklyn — Where Attack's Toxic Smoke Drifted."

There is also substantial evidence that Brooklyn residents have suffered negative health effects as a result of exposure to this debris cloud. At least three Brooklyn hospitals reported increases in visits related to respiratory ailments. Dr. Tucker Woods, for example, who runs the emergency room at Long Island College Hospital, reported to *The American Prospect* that his staff handled a "huge influx" of respiratory cases and that he personally observed an increase in new cases of asthma and bronchitis, as well as worsening cases of chronic respiratory ailments.

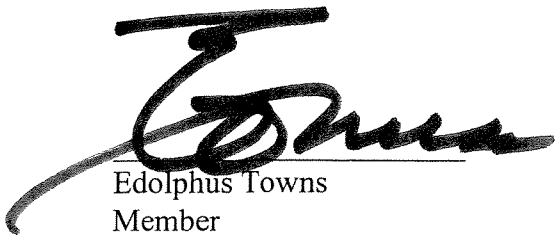
Despite these observations, however, it appears that federal and city officials intend to exclude Brooklyn residents from the registry unless they happened to be in lower Manhattan on September 11, 2001. Thomas R. Frieden, Commissioner of New York's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, stated in a September 19, 2002, letter that the registry "is not able to enroll all those exposed." Dr. Frieden further stated that he had "data suggesting that lower Manhattan was most heavily affected." Based on this data, he reported that "the scientific advisors to the program have recommended that the registry focus on persons exposed in lower Manhattan."

While we understand the need for logistical constraints on the registry, we do not understand the scientific rationale for excluding Brooklyn residents altogether. Our concern is especially heightened considering that while environmental tests were conducted in lower Manhattan, no such testing was done in Brooklyn. In the absence of data, it is premature to conclude that Brooklyn residents were not affected and should be excluded from the registry.

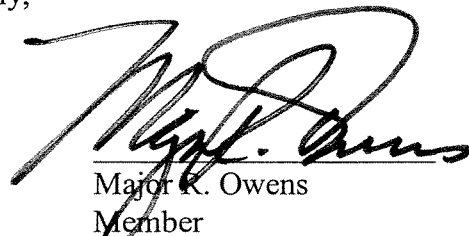
For these reasons, we believe there is a strong rationale for including Brooklyn residents in the World Trade Center Registry to monitor their health status. We respectfully request that you inform us (1) whether the registry will include any residents from Brooklyn and (2) if so, what steps you intend to take to ensure that Brooklyn residents are properly included.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

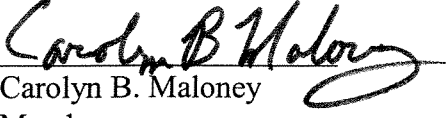


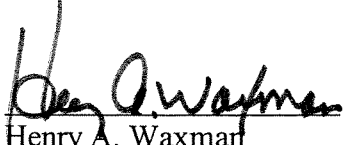
Edolphus Towns
Member
Committee on Government Reform



Major R. Owens
Member
Committee on Government Reform

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
October 28, 2002
Page 3


Carolyn B. Maloney
Member
Committee on Government Reform


Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Government Reform

cc: Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH
Administrator
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Public Health Service